

Frequently Asked Questions about the Public Safety Employees' Retirement System (PSERS)

(Note: PSERS becomes effective July 1, 2006)

What is the Public Safety Employees Retirement System?

PSERS is a new retirement system created by the 2004 Legislature. It establishes a separate system for those public employees whose jobs contain a high degree of physical risk to their own personal safety.

Who is eligible to be a member of PSERS?

Public employees, except Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) Plan 1 members, who:

- Engage in duties that provide public protection of lives and property, have the authority and power to arrest, conduct criminal investigations, enforce the criminal laws of the state of Washington, and the authority to carry a firearm as part of the job; and
- Are employed by a PSERS employer on a full-time, fully compensated basis in one of the following job classes:

City:

- Corrections officers
- Jailers
- Police support officers
- Custody officers
- Bailiffs

County:

- Corrections officers
- Jailers
- Custody officers
- Sheriffs corrections officers
- Probation officers
- Probation counselors

State:

- Correctional officers
- Correctional sergeants
- Community corrections officers
- Liquor enforcement officers
- Park rangers
- Commercial vehicle enforcement officers
- Gambling special agents

Who are the PSERS employers?

The following employers are included in PSERS:

City:

- Corrections departments, except for the cities of Seattle, Tacoma and Spokane

County:

- Corrections departments

State:

- Department of Corrections
- Parks and Recreation Commission
- Gambling commission
- State Patrol
- Liquor Control Board

What is the difference between PERS and PSERS?

The major difference between PERS and PSERS is that PSERS will provide full retirement benefits at age 65 with at least five years of service credit or at age 60 with 10 years of PSERS service. For those with at least 20 years of service, early retirement will be available at age 53, with a benefit reduction of three percent per year from age sixty.

How do I become a member of PSERS?

If you are not a PERS Plan 1 member, and are hired into an eligible public safety position on or after July 1, 2006, you will become a member of PSERS regardless of past membership in other systems.

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If you are a member of PERS Plan 2 or Plan 3 before July 1, 2006 and are employed in a PSERS eligible position as of July 1, 2006, you will have the option of remaining a member of PERS or becoming a member of PSERS.

If you are a member of PERS Plan 1 and are a public safety employee, or become a public safety employee, you will remain a member of PERS Plan 1.

When do members of PERS Plan 2 or 3 have to make a decision to transfer?

You will have an “election period” from July 1, 2006 through September 30, 2006 to transfer to PSERS. You will continue to be a member of PERS until you elect to transfer to PSERS. If you do not elect to transfer during the “election period” you will remain in PERS.

How do I transfer?

You will need to inform your employer of your desire to transfer. A form will be available by July 1, 2006 for you to make your decision (which is irrevocable), sign the form and submit it through your employer.

If I transfer, what happens to my contributions and service credit in PERS?

Both your contributions and service credit will remain in PERS. You will then accumulate PSERS service credit and contributions from the date you elected to transfer. You will become a dual member, meaning you will have membership in both PERS and PSERS. For more information about dual membership, please see the brochure *What is dual membership and how does it affect me?*

Contacting DRS

If you have questions about PSERS, please call DRS at one of the numbers listed below:

Olympia	(360) 664-7000
Toll-Free	1-800-547-6657
TDD Line	(360) 586-5450
Toll-Free TDD Line	1-866-377-8895

You can also write to us at:

Department of Retirement Systems
P.O. Box 48380
Olympia, Washington 98504-8380

When writing DRS about personal account information, be sure to include your:

- Social Security Number
- Signature
- Mailing address
- Daytime telephone number

E-mail Address

recep@drs.wa.gov

Web site

www.drs.wa.gov